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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to increase parents' participation in the education of their children by involving parents and teachers in a concentrated program of experiences and activities. The setting for the practicum was an elementary school for kindergarten through third grade, where teacher surveys, parent meetings, workshop attendance, and Parent Teacher Association membership lists provided evidence of little or limited parent involvement in the school. The practicum involved: (1) developing a monthly newsletter to strengthen communication between home and school; (2) developing teacher training programs which stressed effective conferencing and communication with parents; (3) publicizing parent meetings, workshops, and special school events on local radio and community newspapers; (4) creating the Parent Hall of Fame to recognize parents who made outstanding contributions to the school; (5) coordinating the work of parent volunteers and providing them with certificates and a special reception from school staff; and (6) providing parents with a friendly environment in which to volunteer their time, talents, and materials. An analysis of survey responses from parents and teachers, membership lists, and parent activity lists indicated that, after the practicum activities and experiences were completed, parent involvement had increased in classroom participation and attendance at parent meetings and workshops. Contains 32 references and the survey instruments. (Author/AC)

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Strengthening Teachers' Contact and Involvement with Parents Through a Concentrated Program of Experiences and Activities

by

Rita McTyre Henderson

Cluster 41

A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Rita McTyre Henderson under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

22 July 1993
Date of Final Approval of Report

Roberta Wong Bouverat
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Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening Teachers' Contact and Involvement with Parents Through a Concentrated Program of Experiences and Activities. Henderson, Rita M., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.

This practicum was designed to increase parental involvement in the education of children. A concentrated program of experiences and activities was developed and provided for teachers and parents to help increase the involvement of parents in the education of their children. The major goal of this practicum was to meet parental needs through supportive school programs and activities in an efficient and effective manner.

The writer designed and provided many activities for parents and teachers; developed and designed a monthly school newsletter to strengthen the communication between home and school; developed teacher training programs which stressed effective conferencing and communication skills with parents; publicized parent meetings, workshops, and special school events on the local radio and community newspaper; created the Parent Hall of Fame, recognizing parents with outstanding contributions to the school; coordinated and provided parent volunteers with certificates and a special reception from the staff; and provided parents with a friendly environment in which to volunteer their time, talents, and materials.

Analysis of data revealed that parental involvement had increased in classroom participation and attendance at parent meetings and workshops after the practicum activities and experiences were completed. PTA membership had decreased, however, this was in part due to a change of membership requirements. Overall, teachers' contact and involvement with parents were strengthened through this concentrated program of experiences and activities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The community of the work setting was a small municipality. The community was considered suburban and rural. Historically the population was composed of families who were dependent upon agriculture as a livelihood, however, in recent years agriculture gave way to industry and retail. The community, however, was best described as a "bedroom" community in which much of the working force commuted to larger neighboring cities. Moving now from the employment conditions of the community to the economic conditions of the community, it should be noted that the work setting was in close proximity to a housing project which was home for many children whose families were economically deprived. However, the population was predominately mid-economic level. Families in the community practiced a variety of religions including Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Jehovah's Witness.

The community was about two hundred years old. It was well established with schools, churches, small discount shopping centers, restaurants and recreational facilities, one hospital, one ambulance service company, a city police department, a county sheriff's department, and a volunteer fire department.

In summary, some children came from wealthy families, whereas, some children came from poor families. Some parents had college educations, whereas, other parents did not possess a high school diploma. Some of the children had large nuclear families, whereas,

other children had only a single parent. Many varied lifestyles existed among children in the school. However, the community was best described as middle-class and Protestant.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

More specifically, the writer's work setting was an elementary school which contained grades kindergarten through third grade. Two federally subsidized housing projects were located within easy walking distance of the school. The elementary school was a part of an educational system that had an average of 29% of students who received free or reduced meals. However, the elementary school had 42% of its students who received free or reduced price meals, the highest percentage of any school within the county school system.

The school's population consisted approximately of 185 kindergarten students, 200 first grade students, 175 second grade students, and 200 third grade students. The certificated staff included seven kindergarten teachers, eight first grade teachers, eight second grade teachers, seven third grade teachers, four SIA (Special Instruction Assistance) teachers, seven special education teachers, one media specialist, one principal, and one assistant principal. The non-certificated staff in the school included one secretary, one office clerk, nine para-professionals, and one media clerk. The writer was a third grade teacher in the elementary school. The writer was Chairman of the Parental Involvement Committee at the school.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Parent involvement was considered to be important in the education of children. The degree of parent involvement in the school was limited. The operational definition of parent involvement was the inclusion of parents in the educational process of children within the school or home environments. Parents could be teachers at home, volunteers at school, audiences at student programs, and participants in parent workshops and meetings. There were many opportunities for parent involvement which were not acted upon by parents in the school.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of little or limited parent involvement in the school was supported by teacher surveys, parent meetings, Special Instructional Assistance (SIA) workshop attendance sheets, and Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) membership lists. Table 1 presents a comparison of the level of parent involvement in the academic year of 1991-92 and the projected level of parent involvement during the academic year of 1992-93.

A survey was distributed to the teachers at the school in May of 1992. Twenty-four teachers responded out of a total teacher population of 34 in the school. The survey was designed to gather data in regard to teachers' opinions on parent involvement within classrooms

specifically and within the school generally. Table 2 sets forth the results of this survey.

Table 1

Parent Involvement and Projected Outcomes

Date	1991-92	1992-93
Parent Attendance at SIA Meetings	15/1400	50/1400
Parent Membership in PTA	467/1400	700/1400

Evidence of the little and limited parent involvement was supported by data compiled from the teacher survey. On the teacher survey 20 out of 24 teachers disagreed with the statement that parents spend enough time helping children with school work. Twenty-three out of 24 teachers strongly agreed that parents needed to be more involved with teachers' efforts in educating children. Twenty-four out of 24 teachers agreed that the parents should stay more informed about the daily activities of the classroom and special school-related activities. Twenty-four out of 24 teachers agreed that parents needed to become more involved in PTA and other organizations which benefit the students. Twenty-four teachers out of 34 teachers at the school responded to the survey on parent involvement. Table 3 shows teachers' responses and projected responses concerning teachers' opinions on parent involvement.

Evidence of little parent involvement also was supported by attendance sheets from parent meetings and workshops during the school year 1991-92 and lists of PTA membership. The highest attendance at a

Table 2

Results of Teacher Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement Based on the Likert Scale

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	No Opinion	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Item 1	9	11	0	4	0
Item 2	1	0	0	0	23
Item 3	0	0	0	12	12
Item 4	0	0	0	4	20
Item 5	0	0	0	1	23
Item 6	0	0	0	4	20
Item 7	0	0	0	1	23

Items #1 - #7

1. Parents of my students spend enough time helping children with school work.
2. Parents need to be more involved with teachers' efforts to educate children.
3. Parents of students should stay more informed about daily classroom activities.
4. Parents of students need to become more involved in PTA and other organizations which benefit students.
5. More parent involvement would increase learning productivity.
6. More parent involvement would improve student conduct.
7. More parent involvement would result in greater understanding among parents and teachers.

Table 3

Teacher Responses and Projected Responses from Teacher Survey

Date	1991-92	1992-93
Total Teachers Responding to Survey	24/34	31/34
#2 Parents need to be more involved with teachers' efforts to educate children	23/24	20/34
#3 Parents of students should stay more informed about the daily classroom activities	24/24	20/34

parent meeting/workshop for the school year 1991-1992 was a total of 15 parents out of approximately 1400 parents. Four hundred sixty seven parents out of 1480 parents joined PTA during the school year 1991-1992. It was observed that during the 1991-1992 academic year, at any given meeting of the Board of Education, no more than three parents had been in attendance. This observation suggested that parent involvement in the decision-making process was minimal.

Causative Analysis

There were at least six causes for the limited parent involvement within the school. One cause was the lack of recognition by the school administration and staff of the parents' needs in regard to the educational requirements of children.

A second cause for the limited parent involvement was the lack of communication among school administration and teachers in regard to the potential of productive aspects of parent involvement. School

administrators and faculty did not avail themselves to programs which would maximize parent involvement.

A third cause was too little emphasis upon the value of parent and teacher partnerships. Parent partnerships could be capitalized upon for the benefit of the educational process.

A fourth cause for the existing problem was little or no notification of opportunities for parent meetings, of teachers' needs for parent involvement or input, or of opportunities for parent involvement within the school. Sometimes parents did not become involved simply because the parents were not informed of opportunities to become involved.

A fifth cause was the loss of continued interest and enthusiasm among parents and teachers within the school. Many times the new school year would begin with fresh and renewed interest and enthusiasm from both teachers and the parents, only to end with interest and enthusiasm waning after only a few months to the point of dissipation.

A sixth cause was that teachers did not encourage parents toward parent involvement in school programs and activities. Teachers were sometimes apprehensive about parents visiting classrooms because of fear that parents would cause disruption or confusion within the classroom.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The problem of the lack of parent involvement was supported by information from the literature which covered similar problems, evidence, and causation. In review of the literature, much evidence was given concerning parent involvement in the education of young children. Rich (1988), Henderson (1988), and Sandfort (1987) experienced

similar problems in obtaining parent involvement in the educational activities of children.

Comer (1986) stated that students in today's world needed more adult help than students needed in the past. Comer believed that through meaningful parent participation programs, schools improved significantly.

Epstein (1987) stated that all parents should be involved in purposeful communication with the children's schools. Epstein also emphasized that parents should be involved in the education of children if children were to become more effective learners. Moles (1987) stressed the need for a spirit of voluntary cooperation among teachers, parents, and school officials. Moles (1987) stated that teachers, parent organizations, and school officials expressed a desire for the support and active collaboration of parents within the education system.

The literature further provided support for the thesis that too little parent involvement existed in the education process. Rich (1988) asserted that the best way to improve the American education system was to combine the educational forces of school, home, and community. Rich recognized that Chapter I research supported the goal that teachers involved parents in helping children in learning activities at home. Rich believed that an attempt must be made to redirect teacher energies to involve families in the education of children beyond the classroom or school. Rich pointed out that policies were lagging behind research concerning family-school partnerships. Rich believed that teachers were realizing more than ever the importance of partnerships between parents and the community.

Blanton (1992) recognized that parents were sometimes discouraged from becoming involved in the education of children. Blanton

realized that before parent involvement could increase, to the point of success, school administrators and staff must have the desire to involve the parents. Within the school attended by Blanton's children, parents were discouraged from becoming involved by administrators and teachers who constantly and critically questioned and opposed many of the suggestions offered by parents.

Schurr (1992) provided many suggestions for strengthening parent involvement programs. Schurr suggested an official parent proclamation which reminded political officials, teachers, administrators, and parents of the importance of parent-school partnerships. Schurr suggested that the principal draft the proclamation and have the mayor sign it.

Rich (1988) said that parent involvement had been a forgotten factor in the success of American schools. Rich asserted that the topic of parent involvement was too big and too discouraging for policy makers to undertake. However, policy makers need direction and assistance from educators as well as parents in regard to educational policies and programs. Many policy makers do not realize the need to know about educational policies and programs. To further complicate this communication, policy makers may not even want to hear from educators and parents. Persistence from educators and parents would help bring the issue closer to consideration, and closer consideration of the topic of parent involvement would help encourage policy makers toward improving parent involvement programs.

Henderson (1988) said that children have been falling behind and dropping out of school while parent involvement had been on the decline. Furthermore, Henderson recognized that parent involvement

was extremely important to a healthy system of public education. Sandfort (1987) argued that too much had been asked and expected of the school and too little had been asked or expected from the home. Sandfort pointed out that parents could no longer stand outside the educational process, but must become true partners in the educational process if students were to reach full potential as learners.

Lack of the establishment of a common ground for parents and educators to work cooperatively was pointed out by Chavkin & Williams (1987) as a cause of poor parent involvement in American schools today. Espinoza (1988) set forth that another reason for the lack of parent involvement was the present necessity of many mothers to join the American work force, leaving little time aside from work for parent involvement.

Ascher (1988) believed that the lack of emotional or spiritual stability in some poverty-stricken families were causes for parents' lack of parental involvement in schools. The opportunity for contacts with school was greatly limited for poverty-stricken families. Landerholm & Karr (1988) argued that parent involvement program activities that did not deal with parents' needs were another cause of insufficient parent involvement.

Allen and Freitag (1988) believed that some of the barriers to parent involvement today included lack of child care, lack of transportation for parents, lack of knowledge in regard to opportunities for involvement, lack of scheduling autonomy, as well as lack of interest in general. Bouverat (1974) stated that it had not been a common procedure for teachers to involve parents in planning and working in educational programs for young children.

Epstein (1987) expressed several different observations in parent involvement. Epstein stated that parents have a basic obligation to become involved in the educational activities of children and that the school has basic obligations in the educational activities of students. Epstein further stated that parents can become directly involved in the educational activities of children through volunteering and being readily available within the school building. Parent involvement could increase learning activities at home and parent involvement could itself increase through parental participation in governance and advocacy programs.

Gordon and Breivogel (1976) outlined five parental roles of parental involvement. The most common role was parents' involvement as an audience. Parents involved as teachers of children represented the second role. Parents involved as aides and volunteers in the school served as the third role of parent involvement. Parents involved as paid workers within the school was the fourth type of parental involvement. Parents' involvement in decision making was the fifth type of parental involvement.

In analysis of the 22nd Annual Gallup Poll, Elam (1990) stated that the poll showed that 40% of the general public felt that parents should have a greater say regarding the allocation of school funds, the content of curriculum, the choice of instructional materials, and the hiring of teachers and administrators. In analysis of the 24th Annual Gallup Poll, Elam et al. (1992) stated that 59% of the poll's respondents would be willing to serve as volunteers in local schools suggesting that school authorities have not taken full advantage of parent volunteers during troubled financial times.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals

The goal was to increase parent involvement within the school. A greater number of parents in the writer's school would be involved in formal, school related educational activities with children, if parent involvement was increased. Many parents were not involved in any educational activities with children.

Expected Outcomes

Levels of parent involvement expected to increase were: parent involvement as an audience, parent involvement as teachers of children, parent involvement as volunteers within the school and parent involvement in decision making.

Attendance of parents would be at least 50 parents attending each school-sponsored workshop or meeting during the school year 1992/1993. It was anticipated that PTA membership for the 1992/1993 school year would reach 700. A greater number of parents and teachers would become "partners" in the education of their children as a result of this project. It was expected that at least 12 parents in each of the 30 classrooms would sign letters of "partnership" with teachers.

Parents would become more informed about daily activities within the classroom and the school as a result of this project. Attendance of parents at monthly County Board of Education meetings would increase

as a result of this project. At least 15 parents would attend the County Board of Education meetings each month.

Teachers would provide information about daily and special classroom activities to parents through publication in the school's monthly newsletter. At least 15 out of 34 teachers would provide special classroom information to the writer to be published in the school's monthly newsletter.

Measurement of Outcomes

Through the use of surveys, attendance sheets, membership lists, and parent activity lists, the writer recorded the amount of parent involvement. Tallies, narrative summaries, and graphs were completed by the writer in regard to the measurement of parent involvement. Charts and figures were also used to help determine an increase or decrease in parent involvement as a result of this practicum.

Parents' attendance at SIA meetings was noted on sign-in sheets available at the workshops and meetings. PTA membership was determined from the PTA accounting books.

A representative parent in each of the 30 classrooms reported involvement in at least nine different classroom or school related experiences or activities during the 1992/1993 academic year (see Appendix A). The outcomes were measured through the evaluation of each teacher's completed list of activities involving students' parents.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem addressed in this practicum was to improve or change the degree and quality of parent involvement. There were many types of parental involvement of which many parents were not involved in any educational activities of children. Parents needed to be exposed to educational programs in an efficient and effective manner which supported the parents' needs. The following statements provided suggestions from the literature. Solutions were given to the problem of little or limited parent involvement.

Meyers and Pawlas (1987) reported that one of the best and most cost-effective forms of communication between the home and school was the school newspaper. Lack of communication was cited as a cause for the lack of parental involvement.

According to Landerholm and Karr (1988), designing parent program offerings to meet parents' needs was another way of solving the lack of parent involvement in schools. A monthly calendar of plans and goals for each school day or week was suggested by the National PTA (1987) as an activity that would increase parent involvement. Staff development improved home-school relations, according to McAffee (1987). Teachers and administrators needed to work more effectively and enthusiastically with parents, McAffee (1987) emphasized. According to Amundsen (1982), when the school and the parents decided to work as a team, the children were able to learn more effectively. Anderson (1974) emphasized the development of a "V.I.P. Program"

which enhanced the importance of the child and family and encouraged parents' involvement in school. Another suggestion from Anderson (1974) was to have parents sign a "guest book" upon arrival in the classroom.

Other ideas were explored in the literature. Chavkin and Williams (1987) asserted that mutual respect and two-way instruction needed to be enhanced between educators and parents for parent involvement to increase and improve. Davies (1987) recommended six proposals for increasing parent involvement:

1. Well coordinated home tutoring programs
2. Homework helper and homework hot line projects
3. Frequent and specific reporting of pupil achievement by the teacher to the family with suggestions as to how classroom efforts can be reinforced at home
4. Parent education designed to make parents more knowledgeable about what the schools are trying to do
5. Home visitor programs to provide special help and advice to low income and immigrant families
6. Parent volunteers assisting teachers in the classroom and in preparing instructional materials (Davis, p. 148-149)

Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms (1987) found that improving the school climate was helpful in increasing and improving parent involvement in the schools today. Epstein (1987) reported that increasing the involvement of parents in children's learning activities at home was another way to increase parent involvement. Amundsen (1982) listed three important ways in which parents could become more involved in children's school life: be visible, volunteer, and vote. Amundsen also stated that studies indicated that children actually do better in school when parents were school volunteers. Defreitas (1991) found that educators helped parents to understand the dynamics of the school and become more involved in school activities. By

involving parents in the educational process, educators helped parents to understand the dynamics of school (Defreitas, 1991).

Galen (1991) proposed an eight step procedure for the expansion of parental involvement:

1. The principal and other district administrators analyzed the school's needs.
2. A committee of teachers, concerned PTA parents, and the principal identified which of the needs might be addressed by parent/staff collaboration.
3. A graduated increase of parental involvement was outlined.
4. The committee ascertained what training was needed for both parents and teachers to make the partnership successful. The principal followed through on the provision of training.
5. An effort was also made to spread the word about the benefits of parental involvement to parents, children, and staff.
6. Ideas for increasing involvement of parents unable to come to the school were generated through brainstorming by the committee. Several ideas were chosen for implementation.
7. Ways to consistently reinforce appreciation by the principal to the staff and parents and by the teachers to parents were discussed.
8. A decision was reached to make evaluation of the program by both parents and faculty an ongoing activity (p. 20-22).

Description of Selected Solution

For this practicum, many activities which were beneficial to the children were available for parents and teachers. Parent and teacher questionnaires, surveys, and inventories provided the writer with feedback as to what activities strengthened the parent and teacher partnerships (See Appendices B & C). Programs serving as resources for parents' personal needs increased and sustained parent involvement in school programs and meetings and provided a strong accompaniment between teachers and parents. Making personal phone calls and contacts, publishing reminders in the community newspaper, and announcing meeting

times and dates on the local radio station helped to meet parents' needs for information and to strengthen teachers' methods of communication. Publications of monthly school newsletters, along with reminders of parent meetings, and with invitations to parents for volunteering time in special classroom activities promoted cooperation and participation between teachers and parents. Volunteers were recognized in the school's newsletters.

Teacher training programs which stressed effective conferencing and communication skills, and the importance of parental involvement were available. These programs provided teachers with effective communication skills for conferences with parents. A "V.I.P." (Very Important Parent) Guest Book for parents to sign was located in each classroom, in order to make the parents feel special. The guest book also enabled the teachers to keep a more accurate account of parent volunteers to be recognized and honored. A parents' "Hall of Fame" plaque honored parents for outstanding efforts and promoted goodwill within and without the school environment.

A list of all parents who assisted in school or classroom related activities during the previous month was listed on the school cafeteria menus and/or the monthly newsletters. The names of parent volunteers were submitted to the writer monthly by the teachers.

Six main factors contributed to the success of the practicum. First, the writer and the principal provided strong encouragement to the teachers in the school toward increasing parents' involvement. Second, much support and encouragement was provided from the principal and the assistant principal to the writer to increase the level of parent involvement. Third, much help and assistance was given by

the media specialist in providing computers and computer software in the production of the monthly newsletters for the purpose of increasing and enhancing the communication among the administrators, teachers, and parents. Fourth, the writer was eager to see much success from the practicum project. Fifth, with the success of the practicum project, the writer acted as a resource for any other classroom teacher or any other school within the school system who was interested in increasing parental involvement.

Report of Action Taken

Certain procedures were followed prior to the implementation of the program. The principal was asked to approve the proposal and the program implementation. The writer attended a staff development course to improve the writer's knowledge of the use of the computer for the purpose of publishing the monthly newsletter for the school. The writer attended a training program for enabling parents to help children succeed in school in order for the writer to be able more effectively to plan parent meetings and workshops. Finally, suggestions and help by the principal and teachers were made to the writer in the organization of parent meetings and workshops.

The projected timeline for this program was from October 5th through June 5th. However, the timeline was extended to June 11th. Each month certain activities occurred which promoted the increase in the level of parent involvement. A monthly newsletter was published recognizing parent volunteers and giving notice of upcoming parent meetings and workshops. Special classroom and school events were mentioned in the monthly newsletter. The parent volunteers

were also highlighted on the back of the monthly school cafeteria menu. The menu was used because every child was especially interested in taking it home to make his or her chioces of what to eat for lunch. The use of the school cafeteria menu was another way to highlight the parent volunteers.

The writer provided information to the local radio station about upcoming parent meetings and workshops, along with special parent volunteers to be honored and mentioned. The same information was published in the local newspaper. The announcements and publications helped increase communication and praise among the teachers, the administrators, and the parents concerning information about school events, happenings, meetings, and workshops.

Parent meetings and workshops were planned by the writer and other teachers of the parent involvement committee. These parent meetings and workshops were planned to meet the parents' needs. Every effort was made by the teachers to provide worthwhile meetings with the parents. As a reminder of these special meetings and workshops, parent team leaders were asked to encourage other parents to attend.

Within the projected timeline of the program, there were other educational activities which the writer planned and conducted which constituted a variety in development and implementation of the program activities. During the month of October, a special survey was sent home by the students to parents soliciting the input of parents in the school parent involvement program (See Appendix B). A special questionnaire was also sent to the teachers soliciting the needs and desires of teachers concerning parent involvement

(See Appendix C). A special staff development program was presented to the teachers in regard to the importance of parent involvement. In addition, a special morning refreshment gathering was planned by the writer and other teachers for parent volunteers. The gathering encouraged a friendly and positive atmosphere for the parents.

During the month of November, a special "Thanksgiving Banquet" was planned by the writer and other teachers for parent volunteers, demonstrating appreciation for the volunteers. The "Thanksgiving Banquet" was also planned in conjunction with a Thanksgiving play given by the students. This encoruaged higher attendance at the Thanksgiving Banquet. During the month of December, special Christmas refreshments were provided for the parent volunteers. This reinforced continued appreciation for parent volunteers.

During the month of January, a special "Winter Pageant" was presented to the parents. At the pageant the school counselor discussed the problem of child abuse and the role of a school counselor. The school counselor was used as a guest speaker to acquaint the parents with the responsibilities and duties of the counselor. Two special staff development programs were also presented during the month of January to the teachers in regard to parental rights, and to improving conferencing skills.

During the month of February, in conjunction with a student pageant, the school counselor discussed children's self esteem with parents. The school counselor emphasized the importance of high self esteem in children and the role of the counselor in this regard. Again, the school counselor was used as a guest speaker in order to acquaint

the parents with the role of the counselor at the school. Parents were introduced to the school counselor because they may also seek advice in regard to personal problems or problems with their children. During the month of February and March, special refreshmetns were available to parents in an effort to show continued appreciation for parent volunteers. A parent workshop was offered to parents covering a special topic for the parents. Special staff development programs, activities, and experiences were also presented to the teachers on topics that helped strengthen teachers' contacts with parents. During the months of April and May other special programs, meetings, and workshops were planned for parents based upon the needs and requests of the parents. In addition, the school's instructor for the SIA program discussed informative and educational topics with parents at student plays.

During May, a special parent volunteer reception was given by the staff for the parent volunteers. During this reception, the "Parent Hall of Fame" plaque was presented to the parents who demonstrated outstanding efforts. During the month of June, surveys were sent to the teachers for their evaluations of the program's effectiveness in increasing parents' involvement (See Appendix D).

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The goal of the practicum was to increase parent involvement within the school. Many parents were not involved in any educational activities. School programs and activities needed to address parental needs and concerns in an efficient and effective manner in order to stimulate parental involvement.

Increases in many levels of parent involvement in the school were expected as a result of the practicum, including levels of parent involvement as an audience, as teachers of children, as volunteers throughout the school, and as decision makers in the school programs. The writer recorded the amount of parent involvement through the use of surveys, attendance sheets, membership lists, and parent activity lists.

The attendance of at least 50 parents at workshops and meetings sponsored by the SIA (Special Instruction Assistance) teachers and other teachers increased to 75. The attendance at each meeting varied from 25 parents in attendance to 75 in attendance. Although not every meeting had 50 or more parents in attendance, parent attendance significiantly increased, with sometimes more than the expected amount of 50 in attendance. It was anticipated that PTA membership for the 1992/1993 school year would reach 700. PTA membership reached 451 in January of 1993. Due to a change in PTA membership procedure, no new members were solicited or accepted for membership into PTA after January 31st.

This change in procedure was unexpected and caused the expected membership of 700 to become impossible to attain, after January 31, 1993. Table 4 presents a comparison of the levels of parent involvement between the academic years of 1991-92 and 1992-93, concerning parent attendance at workshops and meetings, and parent membership in PTA.

Table 4

Annual Comparison of Parental Involvement

Parent Attendance/Parent Population		
Date	1991-92	1992-93
Parent Attendance at Workshops and Meetings	15/1400	75/1400
Parent Membership in PTA	467/1400	451/1400

Note. Previously in Table 1, the projected outcomes instead of the actual outcomes were discussed. Table 4 emphasizes the results of the practicum.

It was expected that at least 12 parents in each of the 30 classrooms would sign letters with teachers to become "partners" in the education of children as a result of the project. However, there were no more than five parents in each of the 30 classrooms to sign letters with teachers to become "partners" in the education of children as a result of the project.

As a result of the project, however, parents did become more informed about daily activities within the classrooms and within the school. Teachers provided information about daily and special classroom activities to parents through publication in the school newsletter.

At least 15 out of 34 teachers provided special classroom information to the writer to be published in the school newsletter. Thirty out of 34 teachers provided other information for the newsletter.

Attendance of parents at county board of education meetings increased, but not as a result of the project. The activities planned for the attendance of parents at the local county board of education meetings were not conducted. This area of the project was compromised due to the overwhelming increase in parental attendance of board of education meetings as a result of current major issues of year-round school and proposals for sex education.

A survey was distributed to the teachers in order to determine which activities and experiences of the practicum project most strengthened contacts with parents. All teachers were asked to rank the activities and experiences from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest in effectiveness and 1 being the lowest. A copy of the survey is in Appendix D. The results of the survey are listed in Table 5. The activities were ranked from 1 to 10, with 10 being what the teachers thought to be the highest in effectiveness. The top three items were (a) monthly newsletters, (b) parent meetings and workshops, and (c) in-service training for teachers on parent conferencing skills.

A total of 32 teachers out of 34 teachers responded to a survey at the end of the practicum project, as compared to only 24 teachers responding at the beginning of the practicum project. In addition to the ranking of the activities and experiences which the teachers believed strengthened contacts with parents, the teachers were also asked other questions. The teachers were asked if at least one parent participated in at least nine of the activities of the practicum

Table 5

Results of Activity Rankings by Teachers

Activity	Ranking
Newsletters	10
Parent Meetings & Workshops	9
Teacher Training - Conferencing Skills	8
Parent Volunteers' Reception	7
Parents' Refreshments and Social Gatherings	6
Teacher Training - Parent Rights	5
Newspaper Announcements	4
Parent Hall of Fame	3
Radio Announcements	2
VIP Guestbook	1

Note. The activities were ranked from 1 to 10, with 10 being what the teachers thought to be the highest in effectiveness.

project. Twenty two responded "yes"; ten responded "no". The 22 positive responses demonstrate success. The fact that so many teachers responded to the survey, shows that interest in parental involvement has increased. Many teachers also reported that more than one parent participated in at least nine parent involvement activities of the practicum project.

The teachers were also asked to offer suggestions to next year's parental involvement plans and activities to strengthen contacts with parents. Some teachers responded very enthusiastically with many various suggestions. One suggestion was to show slides of parents working (volunteering) at school in order to encourage other parents. Another suggestion was to provide the parents with a workshop to learn how to work with small groups of children. Another suggestion was to have a certain time during the school day when parents could call the school. The school would provide a teacher or other contact person to address concerns and questions from the parents. Still another suggestion was to have a monthly in-service training session for parents on skills to be taught to the students on each grade level that month. Another suggestion was to change the time of workshops from morning to afternoon in order that more parents could become involved. Another suggestion was to have more projects which involve the parents, such as father-daughter dances.

The teachers were asked to describe any spinoffs that they experienced from the contacts and involvement with parents. One teacher stated that she received much motivation from the in-service training on parent conferencing skills. With more motivation, she was able to conduct parent conferences with more efficacy and productivity.

Several teachers responded that the parents were very appreciative and surprised in regard to the recognition that the parents received this year, especially in regard to the parent volunteer reception and the Parent Hall of Fame. Finally, one teacher stated that parents volunteered to help with up-coming events that were listed in the monthly newsletters. The teacher stressed that it was nice to know that the parents were truly willing to help and did not wait to be asked to help. Because of the monthly newsletters, the teacher said "yes" to an offer of help instead of begging for help from volunteer parents.

The teachers were also asked which, if any, of the activities concerning parental involvement for the practicum project should be deleted. Four teachers wanted to delete the "V.I.P." guestbook. One teacher stated that the reason for deleting the "V.I.P." guestbook was forgetting to have the parents sign it. Another activity that was suggested for deletion was the inservice training for teachers on conferencing skills for the teachers who have already attended such a session. Other activities suggested for deletion were refreshment activities, which the teachers felt were not productive toward parent involvement. The teachers suggested that only one refreshment activity be offered at the end of the school year and rescheduled to another time of day. However, most teachers responded that no activities should be deleted.

Other comments were made concerning the parental involvement practicum project activities and experiences. These comments are listed to show the overall environment during the parental involvement

project conducted by the writer:

1. "I'm glad you were able to get this program started."
2. "I feel newsletter was [a] good communication device and helped to recognize a lot of workers and all the time and effort they put in."
3. "I feel you have done a fantastic job in trying to involve parents more. It is definitely the key in helping the children succeed! Great Job! Keep up the good work!"
4. "You worked so hard. Your efforts should be recognized and praised. Thank you!"
5. "I feel that if you can get parents involved it makes a world of difference in your class."
6. "It was nice to see parents in our school so much this year."
7. "Your hard work has been greatly appreciated by me and my students. We loved seeing and reading our names in your newsletter each month. I know all of these things (activities) have helped."
8. "The parent involvement efforts made a significant difference in the amount of contact between parents and school this year. I hope we will continue next year."
9. "I think the parent involvement has increased because we have been constantly in contact with them."

There were no negative responses from the survey in regard to the parental involvement project. The project proved successful in raising the level of parental involvement in the school.

As a direct result of the practicum, the writer's school, through its principal, initiated a parent involvement committee consisting of staff members. The writer was appointed as chairperson. The purpose of the committee was to encourage parent involvement within the school. The purpose of the practicum project was to increase parent involvement. Many activities were planned in order to accomplish these goals. Since the formation of the parent involvement committee by the principal, the chairperson was included in executive meetings with the principal and assistant principal. The committee is of

permanent duration and has direction in continuing encouragement of parent involvement with the school and in the educational process.

Discussion

The attendance of parents at workshops and meetings sponsored by the SIA teachers and other teachers within the school increased above the expected outcome. The expected outcomes were met. The writer asserts that the result demonstrated desires of parents to become more involved in the educational activities of children given the opportunity by the school, and the encouragement from the teachers and the school. The increase in attendance may be due in part to increased communication between home and school via the monthly school newsletter, advertisements in the local newspaper, and radio announcements of upcoming meetings, workshops, and events.

The expected outcome for PTA membership for the school year 1992/1993 was 700. The outcome was not met. The outcome was due to a change in PTA membership procedure where no new members were solicited or accepted for membership into the PTA after January 31st, 1993. Although the membership of parents in PTA within the writer's school would possibly have increased after January 31st, the number may not have reached the expected amount of 700. The most appropriate and successful time of year to encourage parents to join the PTA is during the beginning of school. With more emphasis on class rewards and praises for the highest class membership in PTA, a greater number of parents might join the PTA. Next year, more emphasis will be placed upon membership activities and experiences at the beginning of the school year in August and September.

At least 12 parents in each of the 30 classrooms were expected to sign letters with teachers to become "Partners" in the education of children as a result of the project. The outcome was not met. The outcome may imply that teachers need to encourage parents to become more involved or that parents are not as cooperative as parents should be in promoting positive school images. The claim is substantiated by Richardson's (1992) findings in a recent poll of teachers stating that only 25 percent of the teachers had found parents to be cooperative and supportive. In addition, the teachers who were surveyed cited the lack of parental support as the most significant reason for considering leaving the teaching profession. On the other hand, teachers and principals must also subscribe to the importance of parental involvement through recognizing when attempts to increase parental involvement fall short or fail entirely. In other words, teachers have the power to increase the levels of parental involvement perceived as inadequate. Seven principles were outlined by Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms (1987) which are essential to a successful parent-school partnership:

1. Every aspect of the school climate is open, helpful, and friendly.
2. Communications with parents are frequent, clear, and two-way.
3. Parents are treated as collaborators in the educational process, with a strong complementary role to play in their children's school learning and behavior.
4. Parents are encouraged (both formally and informally) to comment on school policies and on some issues to share in the decision making.
5. The school recognizes its responsibilities to forge a partnership with all families in the school, not simply those most easily available.

6. The principal and other school administrators actively express and promote the philosophy of partnership with all families.
7. The school encourages volunteer participation from parents and the community at large.

According to Rich (1988) the message heard by many parents is to leave the education to the schools. Rich asserted that "Education is a very human partnership. It depends for its strength, to a great degree, on how teachers and parents feel about one another and what they do to meet each others' adult needs" (Rich, p. 240). Rich further believes that a good home and a good school is needed to educate children effectively. Rich further emphasized that both institutions need to work together to educate children. To bring about positive results, Rich demands a "restructuring" of how teachers and parents communicate and relate to one another. The writer feels that through more parent and teacher training programs, the personal levels of involvement of teachers and parents will be enhanced. Obstacles of failure to relate and to communicate must continue to be overcome in order that parents and teachers can work as a team for the purpose of encouraging students to succeed and to achieve educational goals of the school.

Henniger (1987) believes that teachers need to be more understanding and supportive of parents. According to Henniger, parents also need to accept the responsibilities associated in the education of children. A "constructive interchange" of ideas about education between teachers and parents can lead to respect and understanding between home and school. Henniger emphasizes that the building blocks of effective home-school relationships are strong communication procedures. Stronger communication procedures and more effective teacher training

programs need to be formed and continued within the school in order to increase the amount of teacher and parent partnerships.

Through the publication of the monthly school newsletter, advance publication of dates of meetings, workshops, and school events in the local community newspaper, and radio announcements of upcoming workshops, meetings and school events, parents did become more informed about daily and special activities within the school environment. Information about daily and special classroom activities was provided to the parents through the publication in the school monthly newsletters.

Recommendations

In order to have a successful parental involvement program in a school, the writer recommends that:

1. A parental involvement committee needs to be formed with the PTA, in addition to the parental involvement committee of the staff.

2. A chairman of the PTA parental involvement committee needs to be elected to serve with the chairman of the staff parental involvement committee.

3. Funds need to be set aside for the Parent Hall of Fame.

4. Funds need to be set aside for the Parent Volunteer's Reception.

5. Funds need to be set aside for special gatherings of parents and teachers throughout the school year.

6. A parent's day needs to be established school-wide to emphasize the importance of parents.

7. More qualitative and quantitative parent and teacher training programs need to be continued and formed.

8. A coordinator to supervise parent volunteers and the parent volunteer program needs to be hired, system wide.

9. The involvement of parents in the education of children needs to become a part of the mission statement of the school.

10. Teachers need to be persuaded that parental invovlement works positively toward educational goals, and that teachers possess the power to increase the levels of parental involvement through attitudes and activities.

Dissemination

Dissemination was accomplished through the public broadcasting of the writer's school's appreciation of its parents on the local radio station and publication of parent meetings and workshops and the school's special activities in the local newspaper. The writer plans to provide the system's instructional lead teachers with a copy of the practicum for the purpose of guidance for other schools within the system concerning the increase of parent involvement within school settings.

The writer plans to disseminate the practicum results among community and congressional leaders. The practicum results can lead into other areas of parental involvement in the education of children. On the local level of government, parents may become involved in the education of children through election onto the county school board of education.

The writer contacted a state representative within the school's district in regard to parental involvement in the education of children. The state representative has been a representative for ten years, acquiring some leadership roles such as Vice-Chair of State Planning and Community Affairs, and Chairman of the House Ethics Committee.

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APPENDIX

A

LIST OF ACTIVITIES INVOLVING STUDENTS' PARENTS

Name of Teacher_____ Grade_____

LIST OF ACTIVITIES

INVOLVING STUDENTS' PARENTS

Dear Teachers:

Please list at least one parent who has been involved in each of the activities listed below.

Joined PTA _____

Completed Survey _____

Served as resource to classroom curriculum studies _____

Contributed to newsletter or calendar _____

Participated in classroom lesson activity _____

Constructed teaching materials for the classroom curriculum _____

Attended specific parent meetings or workshop _____

Signed partnership agreement _____

Signed Guest Book located in classroom _____

Attended Monthly County Board of Education Meeting _____

Attended parent/teacher conference _____

Attended school assembly program _____

Attended classroom presentation _____

Supervised on field trip _____

Read to Children in Classroom _____

Concerning the list of activities above, did you have at least one parent to participate in at least nine different classroom or school related experiences or activities during the 1992/1993 academic year? Yes/No

APPENDIX

B

PARENTAL SURVEY

PARENTAL SURVEY

Dear Parents,

In a continuous effort to improve and better meet the needs of our community, we would like you to answer just a few questions. All responses will be considered confidential and no one will know who answered what. You may return the survey in a sealed envelope dropped off in the office or return the form to your child's teacher. We honestly want to know how we can serve your child better.

1. What do you like best about our school?

2. What would you like us to change? Why?

3. What activities would you like to see us continue or add?

4. How can we improve communication between home and school?

5. How can we help you feel more welcome at school?

6. Comments:

Please return. Your input is valuable.

APPENDIX

C

TEACHER SURVEY

Dear Teachers:

Please complete this survey by Monday afternoon and give to the secretary.

Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What do you think is the best activity a parent can become involved in concerning the education of their child?

2. What is the least desirable contact that you would consider with a parent?

3. What would you like to know more about parent involvement?

4. List some experiences and activities that you would like your students' parents to become involved in.

5. What does parent involvement mean to you?

APPENDIX D

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

SURVEY TO: TEACHERS
SURVEY FROM: RITA HENDERSON
RE: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
Teacher's Name_____

DIRECTIONS: *Which of the following activities or experiences strengthened your contact with parents the most? Please rank the following activities from 1 to 10, with 10 being what you think was the highest in effectiveness.*

ACTIVITIES:

Parent Hall of Fame _____
Parent Volunteer Reception (May 26th) _____
V.I.P. Guestbook _____
Monthly Newsletters _____
WDPC (Local) radio announcements concerning parent meetings and workshops, as well as, special school events _____
Newspaper announcements of parent meetings and workshops, as well as, special school events _____
In Service training (January 25) on parent conferencing skills given by Debbie Bell _____
In Service training concerning rights of parents and parent conferencing skills given by Judy Henry _____
Parent meetings and workshops sponsored by county school system, individual schools, or SIA teachers _____
Special refreshments for parents to show our appreciation _____

Please describe suggestions of activities you would like to see added next year to strengthen your contacts with parents. _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Describe any spinoffs you experienced from the contacts and involvement with parents._____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Which, if any of the activities concerning parental involvement should be deleted?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Comments:_____
_____
_____
_____